

# Preparing for TAFE

A Victorian guide for students with a disability

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This handbook is can be download from the Victorian NDCO Website [www.ndcovictoria.net.au](http://www.ndcovictoria.net.au)

**Disclaimer** While the NDCO program has attempted to make the information in this booklet as accurate as possible, there is no guarantee given as to the accuracy or currency of information. Readers are advised to contact providers directly for further clarity.

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# Definition of disability

The definition of disability under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) is quite broad and includes dyslexia, medical conditions and mental illness. Institutes of TAFE and other providers of higher education recognise the formal definition of disability and provide academic and participative assistance for students who identify as having a disability in one of the following categories.

- Physical
- Intellectual
- Psychiatric
- Sensory
- Neurological
- Learning disabilities
- Physical disfigurement
- The presence in the body of disease-causing organisms

Students who identify are not always supported through the secondary education system. It is important to know that the full definition of disability is recognised at TAFE, and services are in place to assist students across all categories of the definition of disability including chronic and temporary medical conditions and mental health disorders.

When you plan your TAFE studies, consider whether you have to put in extra support at school because of your disability or medical condition. If you do, it is important that you talk with the disability services usually located in the Student Support Services of the TAFE to find out about the range of academic and participative assistance, entry schemes, and funding that may be available at TAFE to help you participate in and complete your studies.

# Disability legislation and standards

Education providers are guided to facilitate access for people with a disability through the Disability Standards for Education 2005. The Standards make sure that Institutes of TAFE:

- do not exclude people with a disability from course design, curriculum, and assessment processes
- provide student services for people with a disability
- prevent and appropriately respond to acts of discrimination and/or harassment against people with a disability
- provide accessible information about courses and enrolment procedures
- provide appropriate reasonable adjustments to facilitate opportunities for people with a disability to fully participate in their studies and in life on campus.

Under the Act and Standards, students with a disability are protected from discrimination while they participate in education.

Under the legislation, all Institutes of TAFE have a legal obligation to ensure as far as possible that prospective and existing students with a disability have the opportunity to access TAFE on the same basis as other students and achieve outcomes that are not dissimilar to those of their peers without a disability.

Please visit

Disability Standards for Education or

<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/F2005L00767>

Know your Rights

<http://www.ddaedustandards.info/>

# Complaints resolution

If you feel that you are being discriminated against or harassed because of your disability while you are studying at an Institute of TAFE, you can seek advice from:

- a student services officer
- a teacher or course coordinator
- an access and equity officer
- a disability liaison officer.

Institutes of TAFE are committed to provide proper and fair avenues for resolving student concerns in a quick and effective manner. Each Institute of TAFE has policies and procedures that outline the steps towards resolution. These policies and procedures are available to students.

If, after you access support through your Institute of TAFE, you still feel that the matter has not been adequately resolved, you have the right to contact the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission for advice.

Advice line      1300 292 153

Phone            1300 891 858

TTY                1300 292 153

Email             [enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@veohrc.vic.gov.au)

Website          [www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au)



# About TAFE in Victoria

The Victorian Government believes that all Victorians should have opportunities to acquire qualifications as a key to workforce participation and economic opportunity.

The Victorian Government has committed to provide unlimited subsidised places in TAFE for all people aged 20 years or younger.

For people aged 20 years and over, the Government will subsidise TAFE places for all training at the foundation skills level and for any qualification higher than the highest qualification a person already holds.

TAFE courses in Victoria are designed to meet the needs of people who are:

- developing or improving literacy, numeracy, and language skills in foundation and preparation studies
- developing initial vocational skills in introductory courses at certificate I and II levels
- building on current skills at certificate III and IV levels
- deepening skills for higher-level work roles and responsibilities in diploma courses and higher.

The Victorian Skills Gateway is your one-stop-shop for vocational training in Victoria

Help and Advice      131 823

Email                    [tafe.courseline@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:tafe.courseline@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Website                 [www.education.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway)

Although some people are very clear about the training and study they require to achieve their vocational goals, others are not sure about the areas of study or training they want to pursue.

Careers counsellors at most Institutes of TAFE in Victoria can help prospective students make the right choices about future study options.

## Studying at TAFE

TAFE courses are delivered in a range of ways.

### Flexible delivery

Flexible delivery is simply a flexible approach to providing education and training. It means that, within reason, you may have the opportunity to negotiate the time, place, and method of learning that best suits your needs. Flexible delivery may suit you if you:

- have a disability which prevents you from attending classes
- cannot attend regular classes
- have transport difficulties.

Flexible delivery can give you greater control over your learning. You know best how your disability affects your ability to study. It is important that you communicate your resource and learning needs and negotiate outcomes that best suit your requirements.

### Open learning/distance education

Distance education, sometimes referred to as 'open learning', gives you the opportunity to study and balance your other commitments. This mode of study means that you can study without having to attend face-to-face classes on campus. You can study from home or in a remote area without having to relocate. You can be a part-time or a full-time student. You may choose to do your entire course by distance education

or to do some by distance and some face-to-face. Not all courses can be studied by distance.

## Online learning

Online learning is a way of providing flexible learning and teaching through a course, unit, or lesson made available through the internet. Often, online chat rooms for students are set up to facilitate student discussions and contact with the teachers of the course. Not all courses are available online.

## Classroom-based learning

Face-to-face, classroom-based learning is the traditional method of learning and teaching. Often, courses that are delivered face-to-face also have components of online or flexible delivery built into them. Field placements are a requirement of some courses and are an opportunity for students to experience the workplace under supervision.

## Trainees and apprentices

Trainees and apprentices complete training while they learn the skills of their trade in the workplace. The training component can be offered either in the workplace or off-the-job. The trainee or apprentice attends TAFE as part of off-the-job training. The time spent in formal training varies depending on industry requirements. For example, it may involve attendance at TAFE for one week a month, or one day a week.

## Workplace-based training

Workplace-based training is structured training that is delivered in the workplace by the teachers of TAFE. A teacher visits the workplace and delivers training to individuals or groups. Employers usually arrange workplace-based training with Institutes of TAFE.

## Skills recognition

Institutes of TAFE offer skills recognition which is a process that matches what you already know with the skills and knowledge that you learn from a course of study. People learn in different ways and the skills recognition process takes your skills, education, and experiences into account, regardless of where these were gained. Skills recognition can give you credits in a course of study which may reduce the time it takes you to complete your course. Please contact the skills recognition officer at an Institute of TAFE if you want to apply for skills recognition.

## Foundation skills courses

The Victorian Government has made a guarantee that all people who begin their TAFE studies at the preparatory level will be subsidised with government funding. Other government-funded places are also available. Foundation skills courses are also referred to as pre-vocational or preparatory courses. These courses are available at most Victorian Institutes of TAFE. Foundation skills courses are designed to ease you back into the educational environment if you have had a long break from studying, or if you feel that you did not develop sound study skills during your previous educational experiences. Foundation skills courses help you to gain essential learning and study skills before you move to TAFE courses at higher levels. Foundation skills courses may include:

- general education courses
- English language courses
- literacy and numeracy courses up to certificate IV level
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) (foundation level)
- the Certificate I in Transition Education
- the Certificate I in Work Education.

Please contact your local Institute of TAFE to discuss the foundation skills courses that are available to you.

## Selection into a course and your rights

The Australian Government believes that all people with a disability have the right to participate in education and training. The Disability Standards for Education 2005 were formulated by the Attorney- General under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The Standards provide a framework on which students with a disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

Dave was 15 years old when he went to TAFE to undertake an eight-week pre-vocational course. Dave had been referred to TAFE by the year level coordinator at his school who was worried Dave did not have the learning capacity to undertake his studies at year 10 or higher.

During the eight-week course in TAFE, Dave was identified as having indicators of a learning disorder. The disability liaison officer and other specialist staff from TAFE supported Dave through his formal assessment which confirmed his learning disorder. Dave was provided with alternative learning methods, such as speech-to-text and screen-reading software. He prospered with the learning tools and successfully completed three television broadcasting modules as a component of the prevocational course.

Dave went on to complete a Certificate II in Information Technology on a part-time basis at TAFE. He has since secured ongoing, fulltime work in a warehouse and has enrolled in further studies in warehousing. Dave attributes his success to his opportunity to learn how to learn in the pre-vocational course in TAFE.

According to the Standards, Institutes of TAFE must ensure that, as a prospective student with a disability, you are able to seek admission to and enrol in a course on the same basis as a prospective student without a disability.

In doing so, representatives of the Institute of TAFE must consult with you to determine whether the disability will affect your ability to fulfil the course requirements. Based on the outcome of this consultation, the Institute of TAFE's representative must then decide if adjustments need to be made to make sure that you can participate on the same basis as a student without a disability. This is often done in consultation with you and the disability liaison officer (DLO) of the Institute of TAFE.

It is also important to understand that not all applicants to a course will automatically receive admission to that course. Most TAFE courses:

- have essential minimum entry requirements
- base their selection on an expectation that students will successfully complete the course
- have a limit to the number of places that are available in each course.

Selection may also be based on your academic results, prior work or life experiences, other abilities, or a combination of these.

Selection decisions cannot:

- exclude you on the basis of your disability
- exclude you based on the cost of providing appropriate support services for you (unless doing so causes unjustifiable hardship to the educational provider)
- be based on the likelihood of your future employment after you have completed your chosen course of study.

However, you may be precluded if you cannot meet the minimum entry requirements or undertake the inherent requirements of the course.

## Disclosing your disability

Disclosure is a dilemma that most students with a disability face. It is important to know that Institutes of TAFE are committed to promoting an environment where diversity and difference are valued and respected.

In a TAFE environment, confidentiality is taken very seriously. TAFE staff understand that they must seek your permission to tell anyone else about your disability and why. For example, the DLO may want to inform the teaching department to make sure that appropriate reasonable adjustments (for example, alternative exam arrangements or extended time to complete assessment tasks) are put in place for you so that you can complete your studies. By talking with the DLO, you can make sure that the exact nature of your individual needs is kept confidential but you still receive appropriate accommodations.

It is important to realise that you are not obliged to disclose your disability. However, if you choose not to do so, TAFE staff may not be able to meet your specific needs as they will not know what your needs are. It is also important to think about what you want to achieve by disclosing and to whom you want to disclose your disability. How much you tell TAFE staff and others about your disability is up to you! This should be on a 'need to know' basis. People do not need to know about your disability or medical condition if it does not impact on your learning. You do not need to disclose anything that is not relevant to your learning needs.

## Enrolment

Most Institutes of TAFE ask a disability-related question on their enrolment forms. This information is used to assist with appropriate planning and budgeting for the supports needed to help students with a disability during their studies. Statistics are sent to the relevant government bodies but you are not identified in any way as having a

disability in any of the TAFE administrative functions. Identifying your disability on your enrolment form is also a good way of alerting the Institute of TAFE that you may require some adjustments in the learning and teaching environment. The earlier that disclosure occurs, the earlier the relevant adjustments can be put in place to support your learning and participation.

## Disability support and the DLO

Each Institute of TAFE in Victoria employs at least one disability liaison Officer (DLO). DLOs are responsible for making sure that Institutes of TAFE provide learning and teaching environments where students with a disability are able to study, free from discrimination or harassment. The DLO works closely with students with a disability who require reasonable adjustments or other support to fully participate in their studies and campus life.

The DLO also helps students and teachers to determine and provide appropriate reasonable adjustments, for example, by modifying or adapting assessment tasks, extending the time allocation for exams, and providing materials in alternative formats such as text in MP3 audio files, in Braille, or in enlarged print. The DLO works closely with teachers and course coordinators, supporting them to provide an inclusive learning and teaching environment.

If you believe that you will need help while you are studying in TAFE, it is important that you discuss your situation with a DLO as soon as you can, so that you can be provided with the best possible assistance. Try to contact the DLO before your course commences. This increases your chances of having adjustments in place early.

The DLO will work with you, your course coordinator, and your teachers to determine the appropriate reasonable adjustments that will minimise or remove barriers so that you can participate fully in your chosen study area.



## Reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is a measure or action that is taken to help a student with a disability to participate in education and training on the same basis that other students are able to participate. If a person with a disability needed to have adjustments made in order to participate equally in TAFE life, and that adjustment could reasonably have been provided but was not, then a finding of indirect discrimination can occur.

You have every right to expect that reasonable adjustments will be made to assist you to undertake your studies so that you can achieve the expected course outcomes. Determining what constitutes a reasonable adjustment is often quite difficult. There is no simple way to define reasonable changes to assessment and course work, given the broad range of possible disabilities and the diverse range of skills required to undertake and/or demonstrate competencies in TAFE courses.

Determining appropriate adjustments often requires negotiation and interpretation between you, the course coordinators, teachers, and the DLO about what is reasonable. At times, industry experts may also be consulted. There are no hard and fast rules.

In determining whether an adjustment is reasonable, consideration is given to:

- your disability and your views
- the effect of the adjustment on you, including the effect that it has on your ability to achieve the learning outcomes of the course, to participate in courses or programs, and to achieve independence
- whether the adjustment will lower the academic standards of the course
- the effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including the educational provider, staff, and other students
- the costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

The following are some examples of reasonable adjustments provided by Institutes of TAFE to students with a disability.

- Modification of the physical environment, for example, provision of a ramp
- Change to course design, for example, substitution or modification of an assessment task, or provision for extended time to complete tasks
- Change to class schedules and arrangements, for example, relocation of classes to an accessible venue
- Modification of computer equipment and provision of assistive computer equipment, for example, a trackball mouse or a large screen
- Provision of assistive technologies such as voice-to-text software, or screen and/or text-reading software
- Provision of information or course materials in an accessible format, for example, text in audio, Braille, large print, or electronically
- Change in teaching practices, for example, teachers may wear an FM microphone to allow a student to hear lectures
- Provision of a class assistant, note-taker, research assistant, tutor, or sign interpreter
- Extension of time and facilitation of exams in alternative venues which may be quieter and smaller, with fewer distractions
- Alteration to the format of assessments, for example, a 1000-word essay may be divided into three 300-word essays, or exams may be replaced with assignments
- Provision of oral assessments so that students with a disability are able to give their answers verbally rather than in writing

# Disability support workers in TAFE

The DLO supervises a team of disability support workers who are employed to provide direct assistance to you. The support that you receive is directly aligned with the reasonable adjustments that have been determined to best meet your needs.

The role of the disability support worker has a number of different dimensions which include note-taker, class participation assistant, reader, library assistant, personal assistant, sign interpreter, adaptive technology support person, alternative format support person, tutor, and mobility and orientation guide. The disability support role varies and depends on your academic support needs. Some of the support roles that are most often provided are outlined here.

## Assistive technology assistant

Assistive technologies can overcome many access barriers in education for students with a broad range of disability. Disability support workers are trained to understand how assistive technology works and can teach you how to use a range of software.

Many Institutes of TAFE have a technology area where you can receive one-on-one tutoring in the use of assistive technology.

## Note-taker

A note-taker not only provides you with notes but also enables you to devote your full attention to the teacher, classroom discussions, Auslan interpreter, and other learning activities. A note-taker is provided for a range of reasons. For example, you may:

- have a physical disability and be unable to write
- be hearing-impaired and need to watch the interpreter
- have a learning disability and have difficulty writing.

## Orientation and mobility guide

Disability support workers can provide mobility guide assistance if you are unable to independently navigate your way around campus or move quickly between different locations. Successfully guiding a person with vision impairment requires specific training which is provided for disability support workers who undertake this task.

## Participation assistant

The participation assistant is responsible for providing high-quality support for you that is broader than just note-taking. Tasks assigned to this role vary and can include research and library assistance, one-on-one tutoring, preparing the learning environment, and providing emotional support if you experience extreme anxiety.

## Sign interpreter

Sign interpreters facilitate communication between a person who is hearing-impaired and a hearing person by translating (voicing) spoken English into Auslan (signing) and vice versa.

# Disability Access Plans

Disability access plans are also sometimes referred to as disability support plans. The disability access plan provides information to teaching and support staff so that they can adapt their learning and teaching approaches to accommodate your needs.

The DLO will work with you, your course coordinator, and sometimes your carer or parent to develop an appropriate access plan for you. It is important that all of your teachers are kept informed about your needs. The disability access plan is one way that this can happen.

You are the most important person in this process. It is important that you discuss any concerns you have as soon as they arise. It is also your responsibility to disclose your needs and to work with staff to address these needs.

All the information in the disability access plan is confidential and does not contain any information regarding the nature of your disability. It only contains information about the impact that your disability may have in the learning environment and information about how teachers can make reasonable adjustments to ensure that you have the same opportunities to succeed in your studies as do students without a disability.

For the DLO to be able to generate a disability access plan, you will be asked to provide current documentation from a relevant health professional to confirm that you have a disability and what its impact is on you in relation to your studies. This information can be from a professional of your choice, for example, a general practitioner, a medical specialist, or an allied health professional.

You also need to give some thought to the assistance that you think you will require while you study in TAFE. You often know best what adjustments will work for you in the learning environment.

Institutes of TAFE are providers of adult education. Therefore, the person who has the major responsibility for your welfare is you. Although TAFE staff will assist you to achieve your goals in any reasonable way, it remains your responsibility to make sure that the disability access plan process works for you. If you feel it is not working for you, it is important that you contact the DLO to discuss your concerns and any changes to your plan. If your course coordinator and teachers are concerned that the supports provided through the disability access plan are not adequately supporting you, they may also want to talk with you and may ask to meet with the DLO to explore alternative ways of providing the best support for you.

## Student services in TAFE

TAFE provides a range of additional services for students while they study in TAFE, including services for:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- young people and early school leavers
- mature age students who are returning to study
- international students.

Other services provided by Institutes of TAFE may include:

- career guidance officers
- counselling services
- child care
- financial assistance such as student loans, and information about VET FEE-HELP and Centrelink benefits
- learning and study support
- libraries
- on-campus accommodation and/or information about off-campus accommodation
- welfare officers

# Preparing for TAFE

Making the move from school to TAFE is a big change for anyone. The change can be an even bigger one for students with a disability. Success often depends on good planning and preparation. It is important to plan ahead for any disability supports you may need.

## Step 1 Select a course

Thoroughly explore the courses that interest you.

Talk with careers counsellors and find out exactly what the course involves. Consider your abilities and strengths and explore how these can be used to help you to succeed. There are several websites that are designed to help students think about their directions and goals after school.

- [Careertips.net.au](http://Careertips.net.au) was designed especially for students with a disability.
- [Myfuture.edu.au](http://Myfuture.edu.au) allows you to explore future career and study options by helping you to identify your personal strengths and preferences.

You can also contact an Institute of TAFE near you to find out if there are information sessions or opportunities to attend taster/orientation days to really explore different vocational areas. These may also help you to decide on an area of interest. Remember that most Institutes of TAFE have careers counsellors who can assist you to find the right course for you.

## Step 2 Decide if you need assistance

When you have decided about a course, you need to identify the areas where you may need assistance. The first question to ask yourself is, 'Will I need to talk to a DLO or will I manage independently of support?'

Complete the following checklist to help you decide if you will benefit from talking with a DLO at TAFE about assistance.

Will I need ...	Yes	No
assistive software or equipment to support my studies, for example, screen or text-reading software, voice-to-text software, modified track balls, ergonomic equipment?		
learning materials in alternative format, for example, in large print, Braille, electronic, or audio format?		
mobility orientation to the campus?		
to make use of accessible parking?		
a sign interpreter?		
a note-taker in class?		
a personal reader or reading materials provided in audio format?		
assistance to research and use the library facilities?		
TAFE to provide hearing loops or FM radio communication systems for teachers?		
accessible classrooms, laboratories, and walkways?		
alternative examination arrangements, for example, a reader and scribe, extended time, exams on computer?		



Will I need ...	Yes	No
additional assistance with learning, for example, one-on-one tutoring or access to additional group tutor sessions?		
alternative assessment options such as oral or visual presentations instead of an essay format?		
to alert someone of my medical condition to ensure appropriate actions are taken if I become unwell?		
to store medication on campus?		
access to handouts and other learning materials before classes are held?		
assistance to communicate with others?		
personal support such as toileting, assistance at the cafeteria?		
alarms installed in toilets to alert others if I need assistance?		
special consideration if I need time off from studies because of poor health, anxiety, or stress related to my condition?		
a safe place to retreat to if I am feeling high anxiety or stress?		
<b>Am I uncertain about whether or not I will need assistance?</b>		

## Step 3 Meet the DLO

If you answered 'yes' to any of the questions in the checklist, you are advised to make an appointment with the DLO as soon as you can. This will ensure an appropriate access/support plan is put in place, enabling you to fully participate while you study in TAFE. If you did not answer 'yes' to any of the questions in the checklist, you may still like to talk with the DLO just to have a support person with whom you can touch base during your studies. You may feel that you do not need any form of assistance, in which case you do not need to contact the DLO. Make a list of your needs before you meet with the DLO. Work through all of your daily activities. Make particular note of the activities with which you must have assistance. Some questions that you may want to ask the DLO during your first meeting follow.

### **Chronic illness or medical conditions**

- What documentation do I need to provide about my condition?
- What alternative arrangements can I make if I am unable to complete my assignments or assessments on time?
- What do I need to do if I am unable to attend classes?
- What happens if I need a break?
- Are there first aid officers on campus?
- Can I store medication safely on campus?
- Is there someone who can coordinate my emergency care plan?

### **Hearing impairment**

- Is the lighting in classrooms adequate?
- Are hearing loops, FM systems, or amplifiers available in classrooms and lecture theatres?
- Are Auslan interpreters available? If not, is there an alternative service provided?
- Can I make arrangements to have note-takers in my class?
- Are video learning materials captioned?
- Do I have access to personal readers?

## **Learning difficulty or disability**

- Is a note-taker available if I need one?
- Are printed learning materials and course materials available in accessible formats?
- What assessment considerations are available?
- What computer software is available?
- What types of alternative assessments are available?
- What learning support will be available to me on campus?

## **Mental health and psychiatric illness**

- Who can I talk to if I just need to talk?
- What do I do if I need a break?
- Who do I talk to if I need some time out?
- Where can I go on campus if I feel anxious?
- Will accommodations be provided if I am unwell and falling behind in course work?

## **Mobility or physical disability**

- Are toilets wheelchair-accessible?
- Are alarms installed in toilets to alert others if I need assistance?
- How user-friendly is the campus for a person with my disability?
- How long will it take me to reach the lecture theatres, classrooms, or workshops?
- Can classes be relocated if necessary to ensure better access for me?
- Are aisles, study corrals, and entrances wide enough for wheelchair access?
- How is personal/attendant care organised while I am in TAFE?
- Is there accessible transport to the campus?

## **Vision impairment**

- Will I be able to find my way around the campus easily?
- Is the campus equipped with tactile indicators?
- Is there a local service to provide orientation to the campus?

- Can campus maps and other printed materials be provided in alternative formats?
- How do I arrange to have textbooks, course notes, and other printed materials provided to me in a format that suits my needs and in a timely manner?
- Are Braille, print enlargements, and scanning facilities available on campus?
- What type of computer facilities, equipment, and software are available?
- Where can I toilet my guide dog?
- What arrangements do I need to make with administrative and teaching staff for my guide dog?
- Who will help me negotiate for lectures to be provided on disk or tape rather than on paper so that I can use them at home, at a pace that suits me?

### **Intellectual disability**

- Are there courses that will help me to prepare for higher-level studies?
- Are the course materials available in 'plain English'?
- Are printed learning materials available in accessible formats?
- What assessment considerations or alternative assessments are available?
- What computer software is available?
- Approximately how many people will there be in my class?
- What learning support will be available to me on campus?
- Will someone be available to provide me with an orientation to the campus?
- Can I record my classes or have notes provided to assist with my memory recall?

## Step 4 Develop the disability access plan

It is important that you meet with the DLO to talk about the impact of your disability on all areas related to your studies and your life on campus. This discussion helps to make sure that appropriate and reasonable adjustments are put in place.

A disability access plan will be developed from that meeting. During this process, you and the DLO will determine who needs to be advised of the reasonable adjustments that need to be put in place. You will be asked to give permission for the DLO to share some information with the people who you decide 'need to know'.

This is an important part of the support process. The people who you decide need to know are an important part of ensuring that you have every opportunity to succeed in your studies. For example, when teachers are advised that a student has difficulty with reading, they will understand why it is important to provide all reading material for classes, including handouts, in electronic format. In this case, the student can access the learning material using text-reading software. If teachers did not know, they may not consider providing information electronically. The student may then be excluded from having access to the information or may be dependent on someone else to read for him/her.

In most situations, the DLO will also request a statement or report from a medical practitioner. These reports are used to guide the development of the disability access plan. Statements from the medical practitioner are not shared with others, although the DLO may mention in a report if the medical practitioner recommends a particular reasonable adjustment.

## Step 5 Stay engaged and successful in your studies

The following is a series of steps for new students to follow, to help them stay connected and succeed in their studies.

Set up a safety net early (for example, introduce yourself to the DLO, teachers, and tutors).

- Do not wait to receive help. If you have problems, talk them over with the appropriate person before they are out of control.
- Start your work early (in case life or health impedes working later).
- Make use of the range of learning, academic, and personal support available at your Institute of TAFE including personal counsellors, academic and learning advisors, and disability services.
- Nobody will do these things for you (search out your own support mechanisms).
- Strive to become an independent learner.
- Participate fully in class. Complete all required reading beforehand, and make sure that you ask for your reading material in a format that suits you.
- Good time management is a vital skill, so organise your time well.
- Be realistic about what you can expect of your body and your brain. Do not be discouraged if you need to study part-time, or even defer for a short time.
- Work out how you learn best, and work on developing the weaker areas.
- Be organised and plan ahead. It is better to ask for help early than after the wheels have fallen off.
- Make sure that you know about all the services available to meet individual needs.
- Do not ever give up! There are plenty of cases where doctors and specialists have told students that they cannot do something and then they go right ahead and do it anyway!
- Know your strengths and your abilities.

## Financial support

Sometimes, even with the best planning, financial difficulties can interfere with your ability to complete your studies. It is important that you are aware of all of your financial entitlements. A range of financial support is available to students who meet specific criteria. Information is provided here about some of the financial supports that are available to students with a disability.

Often, Institutes of TAFE also have a number of grants that they can access on behalf of students. Please check with the student services team at your Institute of TAFE about any grants or financial incentives to which you may be entitled.

### Centrelink

Contact Centrelink by phone for information about allowances and concessions.

Youth allowance	13 24 90
ABSTUDY	1800 132 317
Disability, sickness, and carers	13 27 17
Pensioner education supplement	13 24 90
TTY service free call	1800 810 586

The TTY service is for people who are hearing-impaired or speech impaired. Access to this service is via a teletypewriter machine only.

For more information, please visit  
[www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink)

## Concessions

Students in government-subsidised training places who have a healthcare card, a pensioner concession card, a veterans gold card, or who are the dependent spouses or children of a person who holds one of these cards may be entitled to concession rates for tuition fees in government-funded courses at certificate I to IV levels. The concession rate changes each year.

Concessions do not apply to students who are enrolled in a diploma or advanced diploma. However, VET FEE-HELP may be available for these students.

Always check with your training provider about other training subsidies that may be available.

If Centrelink has advised you that you are eligible for a health care card but you do not have the card in time to enrol, you must ask Centrelink to provide you with a letter which confirms your eligibility and application for the card and discuss this with your Institute of TAFE before you enrol.

## Fees

The majority of courses offered at Institutes of TAFE have government subsidised places for students who meet the eligibility criteria. Courses that are not nationally-recognised or are conducted as full fee-for-service courses are not government-subsidised and their fees are not regulated by the Victorian Government.

Special arrangements allow certain people in the community to be exempt from the usual eligibility rules so it is worthwhile speaking to your training provider for more information regarding your eligibility for government-subsidised training.

Eligibility to government subsidised places is subject to citizenship status, age and the qualifications already held.



From 1 July 2012 each TAFE institute sets its own price for courses with no maximum price cap set by the government so tuition fees may differ significantly between training providers. All training providers must publish their indicative hourly fees for each course on their website as a guide. In addition to tuition fees, TAFE institutes also charge fees for student amenities and materials, within parameters outlined by the Victorian Government. One training provider may charge more for student amenities and materials than another.

For specific information about your eligibility for a government subsidised place and course fees contact the relevant training provider.

## Health care card

If you do not qualify for a pensioner concession card, you may be eligible for a health care card which gives you access to pharmaceutical concessions and other discounts.

Please call Centrelink on 13 27 17 for more information.

## Loans

Some Institutes of TAFE offer financial assistance to students who are experiencing financial difficulties that may jeopardise their studies. Information about loan funds for this purpose is usually provided by the student services department of each Institute of TAFE.

## Mobility allowance

A mobility allowance may be paid to people who are over 16 years of age and cannot use public transport without substantial assistance because of disability, illness or injury. The payment may still apply even if there is no public transport in your Area. Contact the disability officer at your nearest Centrelink customer service centre for further information and an application form, or call 13 10 21.

## Multi-purpose Taxi Program

The Multi-purpose Taxi Program, available through the Department of Transport, makes transport more accessible for people with a severe and permanent disability.

You can use this program if you:

- are a permanent resident of Australia and live in Victoria
- have a severe and permanent disability that restricts your ability to use public transport independently
- have a pensioner or healthcare card from Centrelink.

The Multi-purpose Taxi Program offers a subsidised fare up to \$60 per trip. Some members have a yearly limit.

Members are given a card which they have to show when they first enter a taxi. The cards cost \$16.50 and are valid for six years. Travel can be for any reason. Victorian members receive the same discount interstate for a limited number of taxi trips.

Please visit [www.transport.vic.gov.au/taxis/mptp](http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/taxis/mptp) , call 1800 638 802 (toll-free), or TTY 133 677 for more information.

## Travel concessions

If you have a Victorian health care card, you can buy concession fares on public transport services in Victoria and on the interstate legs of V/Line coach services. Tertiary student concession cards are also available, for a half-year or a full year. Students who are enrolled in courses of between 10 and 20 weeks' duration can obtain a half-yearly card. Most student services departments at Institutes of TAFE have information about travel concessions and the appropriate application forms.

## VET FEE-HELP

Students at diploma and advanced diploma levels, whether they are in government-subsidised places or paying fee-for-service, may be able to apply for VET FEE-HELP (a student loan scheme managed by the Australian Government) if they meet the eligibility criteria. Students repay their VET FEE-HELP debt to the Australian Government through the tax system when their income reaches the minimum threshold level for repayment. To apply for a FEE-HELP loan, you will need a tax file number (TFN) and a Request for FEE-HELP assistance form (this is only available from your education provider).

## Youth allowance

Students who are not eligible for the DSP may be eligible for the youth allowance. Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students may be eligible for ABSTUDY.

You may still qualify for the youth allowance or the Newstart allowance if you have a reduced study load because of your disability. However, you must meet Centrelink's eligibility criteria and provide documentation accordingly.

Youth allowance recipients who are under 21 years of age and who have been assessed as having a partial capacity to work may also qualify for a youth disability supplement which increases the youth allowance.

Up-to-date information and application forms are available from Centrelink's customer service offices.

Please visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au) or call Centrelink on 13 24 90 and make an appointment to discuss your application and how to best substantiate your claim.

## National disability coordination officers

There is a national disability coordination officer (NDCO) in each region of Victoria. The NDCO works with schools, further education providers, employment services, and disability-specific community organisations to:

- improve transitions for people with a disability from school to further study and employment
- increase participation by people with a disability in education and employment at tertiary level
- establish better links between schools, Institutes of TAFE, universities, employers, and disability service providers.

The Victorian NDCO website provides a range of useful resources and information for students with a disability who are transitioning through school and to employment. The NDCOs for Victoria are listed here and can also be found at [www.ndcovictoria.net.au](http://www.ndcovictoria.net.au)

Region 11 Inner Northern Melbourne	03 9686 2354	Kim Broad kbroad@imvc.com.au
Region 12 Western Melbourne		Gary Kerridge gary.kerridge@deakin.edu.au
Region 13 Eastern Melbourne	03 9686 2354	Effie Kapsalos ekapsalos@imvc.com.au
Region 14 Southern Melbourne	03 9784 0400	Sally Bailey sbailey@skillsplus.com.au
Region 15 Northern Victoria	0439 207671	Mark Cottee macottee@wodongatafe.edu.au
Region 16 Western Victoria	0418 108 555	Pam Anderson pam.anderson@skillsplus.com.au
Region 17 Eastern Victoria & South East Melbourne	0418 208 039	andrea.evansmccall@skillsplus.com.au

## Other useful information and contacts

### Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) provides information and resources to support the work of disability practitioners in the post-secondary education and training sector. The website also incorporates resources for students.

Please visit [www.adcet.edu.au](http://www.adcet.edu.au)

### Australian Network on Disability

The Australian Network on Disability operates the 'Stepping into...' programs. Of four weeks' duration, this paid internship program runs during the semester break in June/July. To be eligible to participate in this program, you must have a disability, be in the final or penultimate year of a relevant degree at a recognised tertiary institution, and have the right to work in Australia.

Please visit [www.and.org.au](http://www.and.org.au) for more information.

### Disability Employment Service

The Disability Employment Service (DES) provides specialist assistance to job seekers with a disability who require ongoing support to find and maintain employment. DES is delivered by a network of large and small organisations around Australia.

As a job seeker, you can be referred to DES if you:

- have a permanent (or likely to be permanent) disability
- have a reduced capacity for communication, learning, or mobility
- require support for more than six months after placement in employment.

For more information about how DES members can help you, or to locate your local service, please call JobAccess on 1800 464 800 or visit [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au).

## Futures for Young Adults (FFYA) and Transition to Employment (TTE)

The FFYA program is available to Victorians who are 18 years old, in the last year of school, and have been assessed as eligible and receiving support through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's program for students with disabilities or its equivalent in the Catholic or independent sectors.

The program provides support to students with a disability who need additional assistance to make the transition to post-school options. The program is available to eligible students from when they are 18 years old and complete school until they turn 21 years old (three years).

Another component of the FFYA program is the TTE initiative. This initiative focuses on providing support to young people with a disability who want to pursue further education, training, and employment but are not yet ready to move directly into employment, or receive assistance through a Commonwealth employment service.

Please visit

[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/supports\\_for\\_people/being\\_part\\_of\\_my\\_community/futures\\_for\\_young\\_adults](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/supports_for_people/being_part_of_my_community/futures_for_young_adults) for more information.

## Intake and response service

The Intake and Response Service provides information about supports and services and can also provide assistance with planning and short-term support to people with disabilities, their families and carers in their local area.

People with a disability, their family or carers can request disability supports.

You can request disability supports if:

- you have a disability
- the disability impacts on your mobility, communication, self-care or self-management
- your support request meets specific requirements related to the service you are seeking

To make an enquiry or for more information about disability support, you or a person who supports you can contact the Department of Human Services' Disability Intake and Response Service.

Telephone: 1800 783 783 or TTY 1800 008 149 between 9.00am–5.00pm Monday to Friday.

If you would like an interpreter you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50 and be connected to the relevant Intake and Response Service telephone number.

If you are Deaf, have a hearing impairment or complex communication needs you can contact your your local Disability Intake and Response Service on TTY 1800 008 149, or the National Relay Service on 13 36 77, or Speech-to-Speech Relay Service on 1300 555 727.

Ask to be connected to your local Intake and Response Service telephone number.

## JobAccess

JobAccess is an information and advice service funded by the Australian Government. It offers help and workplace solutions for people with disability and their employers. JobAccess is an initiative of the Australian Government to support the employment of people with disability.

JobAccess includes a comprehensive, easy to use website and a free telephone information and advice service where you can access confidential, expert advice on the employment of people with disability.

JobAccess has information to help you enter the workforce for the first time or to return after a break. It also has information to help you get a new job.

To visit Job Access go to [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) or call 1800 464 800 for more information.

### Office for Disability

This website has information about inclusive and flexible workplaces and inclusive recruitment and retention practices. There is also information for employees and employers about reasonable adjustment and disclosing disability.

General enquiries	1300 880 043
Phone	(03) 9096 0574
TTY	(03) 9639 2417
Fax	(03) 9650 3812
Email	<a href="mailto:ofd@dhs.vic.gov.au">ofd@dhs.vic.gov.au</a>



## Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS)

People with a disability, chronic medical condition, or psychiatric disorder are encouraged to use SEAS when they apply for TAFE or university programs (courses) through VTAC.

SEAS is VTAC's online system for making an equity admissions application to an Institute of TAFE or a university in Victoria. SEAS is only available for Australian citizens, permanent residents, and permanent humanitarian visa holders.

After you make your VTAC application online, you can apply for SEAS online at the VTAC website. As part of your SEAS application, you will need to provide information about how your circumstances have affected your access to education. You will also need to provide documentation for each category for which you apply under SEAS. Documentation needs to be sent to VTAC by the closing date (see VTAC website) as VTAC will not accept documentation after this date. To find out the documentation that is needed for each category, please visit [www.vtac.edu.au](http://www.vtac.edu.au)

All people who apply under SEAS make a statement about how their circumstances have affected their access to education. It is important to focus on the educational impact that particular circumstances have had on your access to education. In your application statement, you also need to discuss your capacity to succeed at study in TAFE or at university. This may include discussion about previous work experiences in relation to the area of study for which you are applying, as well as any other courses that you may have completed.

## Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

The role of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is to help resolve individual and representative complaints about discrimination, sexual harassment, and racial and religious vilification by offering a conciliation process that is confidential, impartial, free, and simple.

It also provides education about equality of opportunity, racial and religious tolerance, and human rights and undertakes projects and activities that aim to eliminate discrimination, and racial and religious intolerance.

Phone the commission on 03 9281 7111 or email [complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au](mailto:complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au)

## Willing and Able Mentoring (WAM) program

The WAM program matches job seekers or tertiary students who have a disability with mentors in leading organisations in the job seeker's/ student's field of interest for a series of approximately eight one- to two-hour discussion meetings. These meetings focus on information about that career environment, developing skills around presenting a professional profile and related workplace issues (for example, workplace modifications). WAM is available across Australia for any job seeker or tertiary student who has a disability on a fee-service basis.

For further information, please visit [www.graduatecareers.com.au/CareerPlanningandResources/GraduateswithDisability/WillingandAbleMentoringProgram/index.htm](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/CareerPlanningandResources/GraduateswithDisability/WillingandAbleMentoringProgram/index.htm)

## Notes